

## ***Our Greatest Resource: Our Elders***

This collection of personal recollections about the past is the result of a twelve-week Friday workshop course held at Clarendon Elementary School. The goal of this course was to teach the importance of using our elders as a resource. As an inter-generational experience, we used the technique of oral history transcribed into written form. The nine 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders in the class each chose a person to interview and made an audio tape of the session. These tapes became the basis for the stories presented in this booklet.

The class had additional opportunities to learn local history. Early in the session, material was presented about the organization known as the Grange and the history of the local Grange building. We made an on-site visit and tour of the building before the present restoration project began.

In addition, two local long-time citizens of Clarendon visited our class to bring stories and facts of earlier life in the village and the changes they had seen. Mrs. Helen Holden and Mr. Leland Congdon entranced the class with their recollections. Mrs. Kathleen Houghton came and shared with the class information about the history of Mill River Union High School; how it came to be, how it was named and the history of its opening in 1975. The early M.R.U.H.S. yearbooks, brought by Mrs. Houghton, were of great interest to the class as they found pictures of their parents. A special thanks to our Elders for sharing local history with us.

Kevin O'Connor of the Rutland Herald, shared with the class ideas on how to take the tapes and write a story. His experiences and ability to share these with the class were a great help to the students and were greatly appreciated. Thank you, Kevin.

Also, a thank you to Dr. David Bickford, C.E.S. Principal and to Mrs. Diane Chartrand, C.E.S. Librarian, for their support and guidance on this project.

This collection of stories, along with the audio tapes of the interviews and video tapes produced in class, will be placed in the archives of Clarendon Elementary School, the Otter Creek Grange and the Bailey Memorial Library.

Gwen McGrath  
Americorp Member



**Mrs. Jean Pinkowski**  
**By: Amanda Murray**

Mrs. Jean Pinkowski has lived in Clarendon for about fifty-five years. She is now eighty-two years old.

She went to St. Stanilaus School in West Rutland, a polish school. There were eight grades, forty-seven children to a class. Nuns taught her. She mentioned that she was taught catechism and not many other basics. Mrs. Pinkowski said she is very bad at arithmetic. She said, "God Bless calculators". She used to compete in spelling contests at the West Rutland school. For activities during school, she remembers jumping rope at recess and the boys playing marbles.

Mrs. Pinkowski grew up in West Rutland, a Polish community.

Mrs. Pinkowski came from a family of nine children. She remembers her father making the children weed the cornfields by hand. Her father sometimes hired children from the High School to weed by hand. He paid them ten cents a row. She also remembers two huge apple trees behind the house that the kids used to pick apples from. She told me a story about how awful the long Johns that opened in the back were.

Mrs. Pinkowski married Phillip Pinkowski in March and moved to Bennington. From Bennington they moved to Clarendon. He worked on the farm she now lives on. They had three children, Jean, Ann, and Philip, Jr. who are now grown, married and have children and grandchildren. Unfortunately Phillip passed away a year ago. She worked at Tampax, retiring after thirty-two years at age sixty-two.

Mrs. Pinkowski and her husband used to take many trips in the fall through the Vt. Extension Service. They visited many states and enjoyed the trips. It was a vacation after the summer work was completed.

She was involved in the Clarendon Volunteer Fire Dept. She served the office of Treasurer. She remembers going to Bingo at the Grange Hall.

Now she prepares meals for the farm boys. She sleeps and does a lot of reading in her spare time. She says she is not as active as she was, even though she keeps very busy. She also hopes she can stay healthy. Her last statement to me was, "It's awful to get old!"

## Mrs. King

By Leila Hancsarik

Honie Diane King grew up in Clarendon where she went to school in a two-room school. There were four grades in each of the two rooms and one teacher. She was the art, music, physical education teacher, school nurse and disciplinarian.

For businesses there was a diner at the corner of Rt. 103 and Rt. 7 called Henry's and it was owned by MaeBelle and Henry Byrne. Mrs. King's mother made donuts for the diner. There were a few cabins and a motel. North Clarendon had a small grocery store and a small gas station. There was weekly delivery of bread, milk, and dry cleaning. In Rutland there was Fishmans, Woolworths, and Kresgees instead of K-Mart, Walmart, and Ames. There were no malls.

Mrs. King moved to Clarendon when she was 5. She has lived here for 47 or 48 years.

Mrs. King went to East Clarendon Elementary, some of her teachers were Mrs. Kelley, Mrs. Gibson, and Mrs. Edinger. Some of the substitutes later were her children's teachers. They were Mrs. Conway, Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Bell, and Mrs. Johnston.

In the summer time Mrs. King would go swimming in the river, play softball, tag, and ride bikes. Mrs. King went to dances at the school in the cellar



and at the Town Hall in Clarendon Flats. Sometimes she went to the movies (for \$.25) or roller-skating.

Mrs. King remembers when President Eisenhower came to Rutland. She rode her bike to see him drive by.

She also rode her horse where the Industrial Park is now.

Mrs. King was a very nice person to interview.

## Helen Vignoe By H. Seward

Helen Vignoe came from New York State and then she moved to California. There she was adopted and then she lived in San Jose. Now she lives in Rutland.

When she was growing up she had to learn to swim, other activities she liked to do were roller skate on sidewalks, ballroom dancing and she liked to be in plays.

School back then was a lot different then it is now. When Helen went to school there were large classes and just one teacher to help. Helen says "Your lucky you have teachers you can talk to and be friends with them."

When Helen was growing up there was a grange, but it was outside of town. Her family and her would go there on Saturday nights and there would be a band that would play so they could dance.



She didn't do much growing up because her dad died when she was 7. She used to receive gifts from her grandmother that lived in China.

Her fondest memory growing up was she would go camping in the Redwoods with 3 families and her own. She would fish for trout while she was there.

World War II and the great depression were going on when she was growing up. "There were lots of Japanese people", living in the area that she lived in. They were put in camps that were guarded.

Helen now likes to bake cookies and visit with friends!

# **The Life of Earl Ayre**

**By: Haejin Lim**

I interviewed Earl Ayre. His birthday is June 13 and he was born in the year 1925. He has lived in Clarendon for 20 years. His living was made as a truck driver. His favorite hobbies are fishing, hunting, playing with his dog, Jack, and volunteering to clean up for Green-up Day. His favorite book is The Life of George Jones, a country western singer.

He went through World War 2. During that time they had to survive through gasoline rationing, sugar rationing, and they couldn't buy rubber tires for their vehicles. They also trusted their neighbors more, they didn't lock their doors, and never took their keys out of their cars and trucks.

Earl has one blood son and one blood daughter as well as three stepchildren.

Earl's worst year of weather was in 1937 because they had a flood.

I had fun interviewing Earl Ayre and I hope I do something like this next year.



Mrs. Holden  
By H. Seward

Mrs. Holden has lived in Clarendon 60 years. She grew up on Woodstock Avenue. She is 80 years old and doesn't think of herself as a senior citizen. Mrs. Holden said, "The years go by so fast".

Mrs. Holden enjoyed playing ball with her brothers, skating, sledding and what she enjoyed most of all was reading. When she was in Elementary School she would get in trouble for reading during class. Mrs. Holden still likes reading; her favorite author is Zane Grey. She also likes to talk and travel, she has been to every state and many other places!

When she was in elementary school the PTA raised money so they could get better heating.

She used to put on chicken suppers at Clarendon Grange. She also would help children read and do volunteer work.

Mrs. Holden is married to a man named George. They have lived in the house they still live in now for 60 years. Their family's farm used to be where Mill River Union High School is now.



# **The Life of Robert Wayne King**

**By Amy Thomas**

The school that Robert King went to was East Middlebury Elementary, which was a two-room school. The person who taught him was Mrs. Stebbins. He also went to Park Street School in Rutland where he was taught by Mr. Messer and many others.

In East Middlebury there were four general stores. At two of the stores there were gas pumps. There was also a post office, a lumberyard, and Palmers Dairy where they sold milk products.

For entertainment when he was young Robert rode a bicycle, played softball and went swimming. He and his family also went square dancing. His parents held kitchen hops, which were when six to ten families got together and danced to live music. At the Kitchen hops someone usually played the guitar or the fiddle or some other instrument. Sometimes somebody would play the spoons.

The way that Robert was taught how to swim was somewhat unusual. He was thrown off a raft in the middle of a lake and he was told to sink or swim. ( He swam!)

Robert's favorite activities were swimming and bicycling.

He lived in Clarendon for about 35 years. When he was 15 he lived here for a time and later on moved back when he got married.

Robert thought that the important people were the local town officials and the fire chiefs.

The thing that he likes about Clarendon is that it is a rural area but it's close enough to Rutland to be convenient.

If Robert could change something in Clarendon it would be the taxes. (I think that everybody wants to do that!)

Robert says, "Clarendon has changed a lot."

## Mrs. Holden

By C. Chadburn

Mrs. Holden grew up on on Woodstock Avenue. She lived there for about twenty years. Then she got married to George and moved in with his parents, in Clarendon. They are still living there as of this day.

Mrs. Holden loved to read Zane Grey books. Now she loves to read mystery stories. Reading is one of her hobbies.

Mrs. Holden loves to travel! She's been all around the United States. She's traveled a lot.

Clarendon was a friendlier town, back then. There was a time when she had to fight with the town over oil. She wanted to get rid of the wood stove and install an oil furnace.

She doesn't think of herself as a senior citizen at the age of 80. Time has gone by so fast for her.

## **Mr. and Mrs. Chapin**

By: Jenn Wright

Mrs. Chapin was born on March 2, 1936 in Granville, New York. She went to school in Tinmouth. She started school when she was five because there were only four other kids in the area and they needed five students to hire a teacher to keep the one room schoolhouse open. There were usually five or six kids in a school. She went on with school and graduated from high school. Then went to a business college.

During her time as a kid they played games in the winter like fox and geese. Then there were always swings and teeter-totters and occasionally a few baseball games. Mrs. Chapin's town also had a Grange Hall and a 4-H group but the school was the center of town. The school kids would have Christmas, Halloween and a lot of other parties. She went to church too. When she was older she worked in a Wooden and Molding Manufacturing Company and at the Proctor Bank.

Mr. Chapin was born June 19, 1934. He went to school in North Chittenden at the Barstow Schools. When he was younger he played a lot of baseball. There weren't many town activities. He worked a lot during his childhood. During his adult years he worked at Vermont Marble Company and then at GE for thirty-one and a half years.

They moved to Clarendon thirteen and a half years ago. They retired and now run their own farm. They do maple sugaring, grow their own gardens and other basic farm priorities. They're involved in the Grange in Clarendon. They go to the potluck suppers and senior meals there too. They enjoy all aspects of their neighborhood and life.



**Mrs. Houghton**  
**By C. Chadburn**

Mrs. Houghton use to live in Clarendon across from Mill River Union High School. Then she moved.

In 1974 the three, meaning Clarendon, Wallingford and Shrewsbury got together to build what now is called Mill River. At first it was called Union Forty. Mrs. Holden and Mr. Congdon helped build the school. They were there for the celebration. Eight months later school started. On January 74-75 they had a ceremony.

Later they had to come up with their colors and there name. Everyone in the school got to vote. They came up with the MinuteMen. The colors they chose were red, white and blue.

In the beginning Mill River had about five hundred students. They had small classes.

Her husband was the first principal. His name is Dean W. Houghton. Mill River's gymnasium was named after him.

# Mrs. Holden

By: Amanda Murray

Mrs. Holden is an eighty-year-old senior citizen that thinks of herself as just another in the community. She has lived in Clarendon for sixty years. When she got married she moved here, to Clarendon.

Mrs. Holden grew up on Woodstock Avenue in Rutland. She went to a school in Rutland that had eight grades, 45 children in 1 class. Later she went to Rutland and Mount St. Joseph. Mrs. Holden said that she loved to read (and still does) when she was younger. She would read in school during class and get in trouble for not listening. Now she thinks that teachers should work harder in kindergarten, 1,2, and grade 3 in English and fundamentals.

Mrs. Holden used to go to card parties and square dances for entertainment. She had many friendly neighbors call on her.

Mrs. Holden said that the PTA for the school in Clarendon she was involved in raised money to get lights and an oil heater to put in the school. They raised money by putting on chicken

pie suppers (she prepared the chicken herself), card parties and other parties she and other PTA volunteers did. In the spring they also sent children door to door selling seeds. She said that brought in most of the money.

Now Mrs. Holden volunteers around town and likes to talk to groups. She has also traveled many places with her husband, George. She has four children. She is now located across from the Mill River Union High School. She is a great person to talk to and knows a lot about the town history.



## Farming

By Calista Bromley

This is a story about my dad Steve. Dad is a farmer now and was when he was a kid.

On his birthday he might have gotten one or two gifts and a cake. He almost never got a birthday party.

Some of the things his family did together were working and going to Rutland. Sometimes they went out to eat.

Dad has one brother now but used to have two. Their names were Roger and Martin. Roger lives in Danby and Martin is dead.

Dad's favorite thing about his mom is that she is a very good English cook. His favorite thing about his dad was that he was a farmer mechanic and he was very strict person. Dad had a grandpa and a grandma. They were very quiet and didn't talk much. Dad's grandpa liked horses a lot so they had a couple of teams to pull. Dad's grandma was a very kind and loving person.

On Christmas morning Dad got up and might have opened a few presents then might have gone out to the barn. On his tree there was probably glass balls or some tinsel. For a gift he might have gotten a watch or some clothes, maybe even a jackknife.

For Thanksgiving not many people came nor did they go anywhere. They probably ate the same thing we do like turkey and some cranberry sauce.

On Easter his mom bought some Easter egg candy and hit it.

The animals they had were cows, horses, cats, dogs, parakeets, a hawk, chickens, and deer. His own pets were a cat and a parakeet.

Dad's favorite things to eat were homefries, pickles, and milk. His favorite toy was a wagon. His favorite spot was the house barn tree house cabin. His favorite gift was a self-functional car.

Dad lived up in the sticks. His house is huge. It has four floors. He even had his own bedroom.

His chores were to sawdust and hose off the manure. Milking sounds like fun.

Dad's favorite subject was recess and lunch break. His worst part about school was getting shots once a year. He also often got in trouble. Once his class wasn't in session but the older classes were



and he burst through the door and when he realized that they were in session he kept on going. Another story is one time the teacher brought Dad to the front of the room. In front of him was an outlet. He started unscrewing the cover of the outlet.

Another story is once during lunch break, Dad and some friends went down to the store. His friends bought a pack of cigarettes. They knew that Dad didn't smoke so they gave it to him. He put them in his pants cuff. When they were at the store, one of the teacher's kids had seen them buy the cigarettes and told on them so when they got back the teacher said, "Come on up here. I have to have those cigarettes you have there in your pants cuff." Dad pulled one pants cuff up out of his boot and a bunch of hay chaff and dirt fell out. The teacher got pretty embarrassed and so he ended up keeping the cigarettes.

Dad's favorite teacher is a woman named Gladys Baker. He had her second through fourth grade. She is still alive now.

At recess they played hide-and-seek. There was a library. The Librarian was Mrs. Stone then. Dad's Mom is now. Dad's best friends' names were Peter Baker and Tom Ars.

When Dad was a kid the thing that made him feel good was helping his dad.

I thought that was a really interesting life. I think Dad was really cool when he was a kid.

# Carol

BY: ALEXIS PRATT

My Aunt Carol is my next door neighbor, my aunt and my treat provider (because she always has candy). She likes traveling, reading and teaching. She is smart and usually energetic. She is a teacher at Burr and Burton Seminary where she teaches Home Economics and computer keyboard classes.

She has two brothers, three sisters, a mom and a step-dad and many, many nieces and nephews. She also has two sons, Silas and William who are grown now. When she was a child her home was in Tinmouth near a few little mini-restaurants and a schoolhouse. Most of her family now lives in Vermont but one sister has a home in South Carolina. Carol has lived in Clarendon, Danby, Dorset, Tinmouth, and Colorado at an Army base where her husband was stationed.

Carol likes to read, garden and travel. For pets she has had Bo-Didley, the dog, and her two cats, Stone and Peanut, which she got from my family.

My aunt has many stories to tell.